

About *The Works Now Newly Imprinted*

■ **Commentary by Nicolas Barker** ■

■ **Binding, Collation, and Provenance** ■

■ **Items formerly loose in this volume** ■

Geoffrey Chaucer *The Works Now Newly Imprinted*

Geoffrey Chaucer

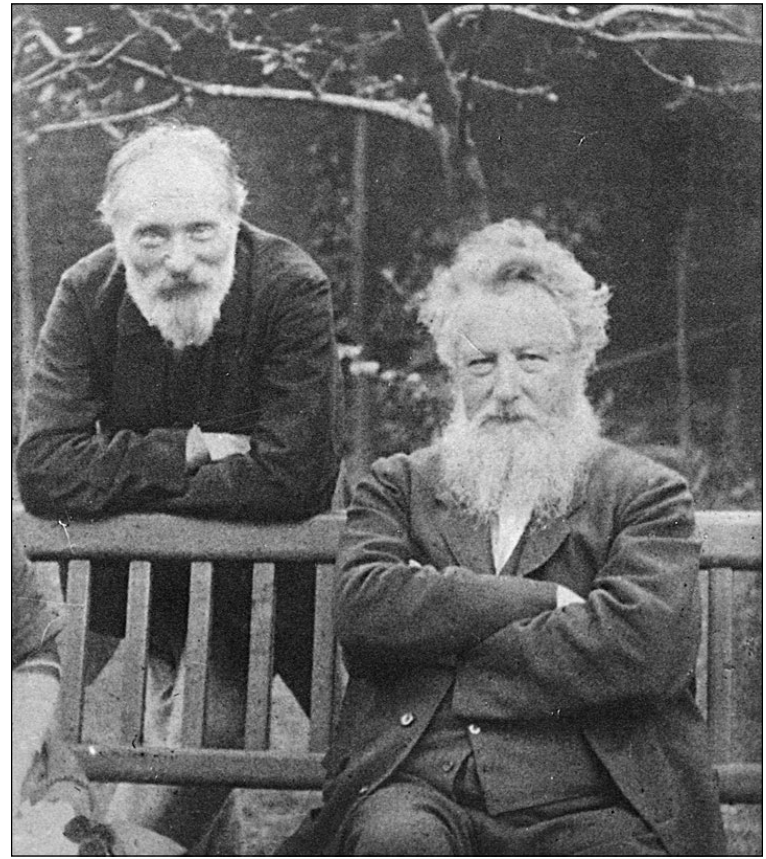
The Works Now Newly Imprinted

Kelmscott Press, London, 1896

The Kelmscott Chaucer is the greatest and most influential book never to have been read. This apparent paradox is due to two factors. First, its appearance, the density of type and illustration, the interwoven magnificence of the page, are so overwhelming that the would-be reader is simply defeated by its wealth. The eye, invited to admire so much visual magnificence, is absorbed by it and strays away from the actual text. Secondly, the book was originally expensive and is now even more so; those who turn its pages do so with care lest they mar its clean white pages or strain its elegant binding. Its creator, William Morris (1834-1896), would have been mystified and annoyed by these reactions. To him, the creation of a book in which text, decoration, and illustration were a single whole, none of whose parts could be separated from each other, was a tribute to the text (a word that means "something woven," as in "textile"), the greatest tribute that could be paid to it. If we now find it "difficult" to read, is it not because our modern age sets too high a premium on speed? We expect a book that we can read as quickly as possible, and we are wrong. We are

equally wrong to confuse monetary value with real value. The best, most carefully designed artifact is made to be used. No greater tribute to the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages, Geoffrey Chaucer (?1340-1400), could be paid than to give his works the finest possible form. It would be an insult to lock such a book away for mere fear of losing money, just as it would be an insult not to read it slowly and with the due solemnity enhanced by its decoration.

It is easy to sympathize with such a view, however hard it may be to follow it. Yet William Morris was not always right in these assumptions and beliefs. The great books of the Middle Ages that he so much admired, whether they were illuminated manuscripts whose colored pictures and interwoven decoration gave them a special visual charm, or the solemn gothic pages of the early printers (enlivened by the woodcut illustrations, and integrated more fully by the shared process than the diverse arts of the manuscript page), were never designed solely to be read. Books in the Middle Ages were as much mnemonic devices as reading matter. The more elaborately decorated they were, the greater the assumption that the reader, or user, would already be familiar with the actual words of the text. The function of large or colored initial letters was to help the reader find the place in a text that he or she had read or heard many times before. Illustrations, pictorial or diagrammatic, again brought to mind a wide range of association and experience that reached far beyond the words on the page. In this they performed a very modern function, like the ability to “add on” an entire range of associated knowledge, images, or information through hypertext. At the same time – and this is an aspect for which we have no



Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, 1890.

modern equivalent, for which we have lost the taste or ability to replicate – books in the Middle Ages had a ceremonial function in which grandeur of appearance played an important part. The book of the gospels carried by the priest at mass, the legal code set before the judge in court, were all part of the imposing ceremony of religion or justice. By their presence, they referred all those present to the ultimate source of authority that underlay the ritual in which they were participating. It was only appropriate that this essential

function should be emphasized by splendid letters, decoration, and binding.

William Morris, the Socialist as opposed to class warfare as to shoddy machine-made goods, felt, rather than knew, these facts. He wore himself out in manifold activity: by writing more than most professional authors; in painting and calligraphy; in designing stained glass and furniture, tiles, textiles, wallpaper, and tableware; and in setting up Morris & Company as a commercial business to make all these things available to the public. His objective was, as with his political agitation, to make the good things of life equally available to all. With all this, books, the last of all these activities, mattered most. He was a pattern designer of genius – time again, as you admire his wallpaper or textiles, the ingenuity and beauty of the pattern takes your breath away – and to make a pattern of text and illustration was to Morris the ultimate challenge. This passion can be traced back to his early experiments with calligraphy, both before and after his *Earthly Paradise* (1869), and to his own book collecting. It was in 1864 that the poet Swinburne took him into the Covent Garden shop of F.S. Ellis, where he saw and later bought a copy of the great illustrated edition of Boccaccio's *De Claris Muliebris*, printed by Johann Zainer at Ulm in 1473. From this point on, the concept of the medieval book, the text written and illuminated or printed with woodcut illustrations, bound in a strong leather binding clasped over wooden boards, was always at the back of his mind.

It was not, in fact, until 1888 that Morris, already aware that his once-strong constitution could no longer stand the strain of multifarious activity that he had habitually put on it, turned seriously to the idea of printing. The formation of the Arts and

Crafts Exhibition Society in 1887 brought him into more regular contact with acquaintances such as Walter Crane the illustrator, T.J. Cobden-Sanderson the bookbinder (who later founded his Doves Press in imitation of Morris), and in particular, Emery Walker the printer, who was already an old friend. In November 1888, Walker gave a lecture on printing to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society illustrated with lantern slides (then a novelty). Some of these showed fifteenth-century printing types that Walker had enlarged in his own studio. With this, Morris suddenly realized that if he had enlarged photographs of these much-admired letters, he could study them in detail and with their help create his own letterforms, which Walker could then, by reversing the process, reduce to printing-type size. As they left the lecture together, he said to Walker, "Let's make a new fount of type." And so it was. The photographic process worked as Morris had hoped, and the actual types were cast, following punches engraved from Morris's designs by Edward T. Prince, the doyen of English punchcutters, already employed by Walker.

Morris's first design was for a roman type based on that of the great Venetian printer Nicolas Jenson, called the "Golden type" because it was first used for Morris's edition of *The Golden Legend* (1892), which was one of the first imprints from the Kelmscott Press. This was only the beginning of the project. Morris knew that "it would be a very false economy to stint in the quality of paper as to price," so he determined to use the best handmade paper, using pure linen rags to make the pulp. This he had made at the established firm of Joseph Batchelor in Kent, and, with characteristic care, Morris designed the watermarks himself, one for each of the three sizes

he decided to use. He disapproved of “large-paper copies” that many collectors admired, since they destroyed the correct symmetry of the margins, another matter on which he had strong views. So when he planned deluxe editions he decided to use vellum. This too could be had from another experienced firm, Henry Band, not far away at Brentford. Ink, however, was a more serious problem; English ink, made for rapid machine presses, was too liquid and not black enough for Morris’s purposes. In the end Walker found what he needed at Hanover in Germany, a stiff, even black, hard to work but reliable: it neither clogged the type nor blurred the impression.

All was now ready. Morris found premises a few doors away from Kelmscott House, the old Georgian house where he lived on Hammersmith Mall, close by the Thames. Walker was his neighbor, a few more yards up the street, and able to drop by whenever needed to give help and advice. Morris was now able to realize another long-held dream. Long before, when he had been writing *The Earthly Paradise*, he had asked his oldest friend Edward Burne-Jones to provide the illustrations for it, and he had indeed sketched some forty-four designs. Morris had himself, with characteristic energy and versatility, engraved some blocks for these designs, but nothing more came of this plan, mainly because of Morris’s impatience with the slow work of engraving. Burne-Jones was now delighted to revive this collaboration, and he provided two designs for *The Golden Legend*, which were transferred onto wood, the line strengthened by a professional artist and then engraved. Other friends were conscripted: F.S. Ellis, now in retirement, helped with editing and read the proofs, as well as advising on publication through the great bookselling firm of Bernard

Quaritch; after a false start with Halliday Spurling, the young Sydney Cockerell became Secretary to the Press, and in effect its business manager, up to and after Morris’s death.

Morris himself designed the borders and the all-over pattern for the title page of *The Golden Legend*, thus developing a highly individual style. It owed much in design to the “white-vine” patterns of Italian humanistic manuscripts of the fifteenth century, but the overall effect had a density of detail and a darkness of color that recalled the German books in gothic type, the Carolingian books that were their ancestors, and ultimately the great Celtic gospel-books with their “carpet” pages that had preceded them.

He changed his mind about type, too. Although not dissatisfied with the Golden type, which he continued to use at the Kelmscott Press, he longed for something darker and richer. He experimented with a combination of Zainer’s gothic type and the half-gothic, half-roman type devised by Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz for the first books printed in Italy in the 1460s. The result was the Troy type, so called because it was first used for *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, first printed by Caxton, which Morris finished in November 1892.

And Morris was already thinking of Chaucer. One of the earliest specimens of the Troy type shows a text taken from “The Franklin’s Tale” from *The Canterbury Tales*, which probably dates from June 1891, when Sydney Cockerell first heard him mention the project. The earliest designs for the border and title page of the Chaucer date back to February 1893, although they were not completed until May 1896. Morris obtained permission from the Oxford University Press to use their standard text, ed-

ited by the Reverend Walter Skeat. Burne-Jones set to work and produced eighty-seven drawings (eighty-five still survive), he and Morris working very much together, so that Burne-Jones's design for the upper part of the page would be surrounded by Morris's work. It was a harmonious partnership; as Burne-Jones wrote, he "loved to be snugly cased in borders and buttressed up by the vast initials – and once or twice when I have no big



Border of stylized vine shoots drawn by Morris.

letter under me, I feel tottery and weak; if you drag me out of my encasings it will be like tearing a statue out of its niche and putting it in a museum." The compositors and pressmen, by now twelve in number, were equally busy, and by the beginning of 1896 the book was all but finished, every sheet printed by hand on the three cast-iron Albion presses on which all the Kelmscott books were printed.

At the end of February, the Kelmscott Press issued a prospectus, announcing its imminent publication, and that no fewer than four styles of special binding would be provided: two, in full pigskin (photographed for this Octavo Edition) or half pigskin over oak boards were to be bound to Morris's design by Cobden-Sanderson; the other two, similarly bound but with a different design by Morris, were to be executed by the firm of J & J Leighton. For these Morris designed all the individual binding tools, for which both drawings and some of the tools themselves still exist. Ordinary copies could also be had in the Press's customary "temporary" binding of blue paper

boards with an unbleached Holland linen spine and a printed paper label. It was widely hailed as the masterpiece of the Kelmscott Press when it appeared on June 26, 1896, and rapidly sold out. Its success comforted the last months of Morris's life, but on October 3rd he died, worn out by the work and energy he had bestowed in so many different directions, not least the improvement of the art of printing. The Kelmscott Chaucer remains a monument to that, and it is not the least of the abiding results of Morris's life and work to set the standard by which the quality of book production is measured. Still more important is the respect due to a great book, and if all the Kelmscott Chaucers, scattered about the world, have a purpose today it is to encourage such respect. Worldly wisdom may require most of them to be preserved from the hands that Morris would have wished to turn their pages; that they can now do so in electronic form is surely a fate that he would have applauded.

Nicolas Barker

Nicolas Barker Nicolas Barker retired as the Head of Conservation at the British Library in 1992. He continues to serve as advisor to libraries and museums in the United Kingdom and in North America, as well as to the British National Trust in its project of cataloguing the libraries of the hundreds of country houses in its care, the riches of which remain almost unknown. His many books include the standard biography of Stanley Morison (1972), accounts of Aldus Manutius and early Greek types, and a study of Besler's *Hortus Eystettensis* (1994). Since 1966, he has edited *The Book Collector*, the world's leading journal of scholarly bibliography.

Binding

The binding for the Kelmscott Chaucer was designed by William Morris and executed at the Doves Bindery of T.J. Cobden-Sanderson; this particular copy was bound by Douglas Cockerell, and is one of forty-eight. The binding is white pigskin over oak boards and measures 17 1/8 x 12 inches (434 x 307 mm). Clasps, on white pigskin straps attached to the back board with six brass pins, hold the binding closed.

The binding of the Kelmscott Chaucer is completely decorated with blind tooling. Blind tooling uses heated tools to impress designs into leather without using gold, ink, or foil. The tools are pressed into the leather by hand with the amount of pressure and the heat of the tool determining the darkness of the impressed leather. The tools for blind tooling are intaglio cut so that when impressed into leather the result is a relief pattern.

The front cover is composed of ten panels enclosed by a simple triple-rule border that extends almost to the edges of the boards. The left and right outer borders consist of lozenge lily-of-the-valley ornaments and the bottom border of square lily-of-the-valley ornaments. Across the top is an unornamented panel containing the author's name. The panel above the bottom border has the word "Kelmscott" with six alternating fleur-de-lis and pomegranate ornaments on either side; above it is a narrow band of dots.

The center panel is a diaper pattern with lozenges alternating between a rose-and-leaf pattern, and a fleur-de-lis and

leaf pattern; the wide border surrounding the center panel uses a grapevine motif with a background of open dot semis; above and below it are panels with oak leaf designs.

The back cover is divided into lozenges by triple-ruled bands with a circular five-petal flower pattern running down the center; the small lozenges created where the bands intersect contain lily-of-the-valley ornaments. Each large lozenge is filled with a leaf with a rosette in the center.

The spine is divided into five panels by four double raised bands. Spine panels are decorated with fleur-de-lis and diamond-shaped crosses on narrow branches.

[Click here to see binding](#)

Collation 2⁰, a⁴ b-c⁸ d⁸(±4.5) e-l⁸ [m]⁸ n-2m⁸ 2n⁶; 282 leaves, pp. [4] [i] ii [2] [1] 2-554 [2].

Contents: a1^{a-b}: blank. a2^a: inscription 'To Margaret Mackail.' a2^b: blank. a3^a: title. a3^b: table of contents. a4^a: blank. a4^b: engraved title page. b1^a-2n5^a: text. 2n5^a: illustration and printers mark. 2n5^b: colophon. 2n6^{a-b}: blank.

Provenance

This copy of the Kelmscott Chaucer, with its special binding and inscription, is what booksellers cannot resist calling “a choice association copy.” It is perhaps even *the* copy, for it is hard to imagine one more evocative of the inner circle of its creation. Merely to enumerate its associations is almost to recapitulate the history of the Kelmscott Press and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

The binder T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, for instance, was inspired by William Morris, and was both a printer (The Doves Press) and binder (The Doves Bindery). The workman in charge of the binding, executed to Morris’s designs, was Douglas Cockerell, brother of Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, Morris’s secretary at the Kelmscott Press. This is one of the first two copies bound; Morris received the pair from Cockerell on June 2, 1896, a few weeks before official publication. One copy was kept as Morris’s own – it is now at Exeter College library; the other was for Burne-Jones and is reproduced here. The artist did not keep his copy long, presenting it the very next day to his only daughter, Margaret (1866-1953) as a birthday present, nobly inscribed.

Margaret Burne-Jones was the incarnation of the Burne-Jones maiden. She had been educated at home and in her father’s studio, eventually replacing her mother to become the favorite model of Burne-Jones’s later years, her features immortalized as the sleeping princess in his “Rose Briar” series. Their increasingly obsessive relationship came to an end, to Burne-Jones’s ill-concealed resentment, when she married in 1888 the classicist (and later government administrator) John



Inscription from Burne-Jones to his daughter.

William Mackail (1859-1945). She had first met Mackail at the age of thirteen when he had recited his Newdigate Prize poem after the ceremony in Oxford at which Burne-Jones had received an honorary degree from the University. Mackail was, in turn, to publish the standard *Life of William Morris* in 1899.

Burne-Jones inscribed this Kelmscott Chaucer with a dignity worthy of the book, and perhaps also with a sense that elaborate words were superfluous; for, as he observed, “there is no preface to Chaucer, and no introduction, and no essay on his position as a poet, and no notes, and no glossary; so that all is prepared for you to enjoy him thoroughly.” Such gravity was, however, unusual in his inscriptions and remote from the affectionate frivolity characteristic of the many illustrated letters and inscribed gifts that he sent to amuse young ladies, including Mackail’s daughter, the novelist Angela Thirkell (1890-1961).

Margaret Mackail retained into old age something of the ethereal distance of the women in her father's allegorical paintings. Her lifelong friend, W. Graham Robertson, described her in a letter of 1936 as one "whose paths were always in the great waters and whose footsteps were never known if she could possibly help it.... As a rule, she would die rather than tell you what she was going to have for dinner...."

Margaret Mackail's copy later passed into the possession of Eric George Millar (1887-1966), Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum and an authority on English illuminated manuscripts. Its last private owner was Raphaël Esmerian. The book was offered at his sale in Paris in 1974 (part 5, lot 26), bought by the firm of H.P. Kraus and sold shortly thereafter to Bridwell Library.

Provenance

Items formerly loose in this volume

The following items are mounted on vellum paper leaves and separately bound in a quarto, vellum-bound volume. The back strip is lettered longitudinally in capital letters: "Items formerly preserved loose in this volume." They are presented in this Octavo Edition as individual pieces.

1. Proof of a photograph (170 x 220 mm) of Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, taken in 1890 by Barbara Leighton in the garden of "The Grange."
2. Autograph note of five lines in pencil, signed from Morris to Burne-Jones, concerning the drawings of (or the proof for) the wood engravings in the Chaucer.
3. Two fine, original, and unpublished drawings by Burne-Jones, executed on stiff vellum paper (120 x 157 mm and 130 x 174 mm).
4. Autograph note of seven lines (on paper with engraved heading, "Rottingdean Nr Brighton") from Burne-Jones, signed "Eph" (i.e. "F" or "Father") to his daughter, announcing that the Chaucer was finished at 3:00 pm on December 27, 1895.
5. Autograph letter from Burne-Jones to his daughter on the same engraved letter paper (2 pages, duodecimo), complaining of the cold and describing humorously all the calamities that might befall his family. On the fourth page, there is a pen-and-ink drawing by Burne-Jones depicting a stout Geoffrey Chaucer (with halo) who supports a Morris and Burne-Jones on each arm; the caption reads, "Bless ye my Children May 1896;" and underneath

is written, "This is the nastiest pen that ever was." On another leaf with engraved heading, Burne-Jones has copied the drawing in ink with a few variations.

6. Autograph letter in ink to Emery Walker on paper with engraved heading (3 pages duodecimo), signed by Burne-Jones and expressing his hope that the Chaucer will be ready for June 3, when he wants to present it to his daughter at breakfast. He also speaks of the seal of for the University of Wales.
7. Autograph letter to Burne-Jones, signed by Algernon Charles Swinburne and dated July 14, 1896, thanking him warmly for the magnificent gift (the Chaucer) and congratulating him on his contributions to the book.
8. Autograph poem of twelve lines in English, signed by "S.E." (Sebastian Evans) on a leaf of laid paper. This poem ("in librum aureum, Trium poetarum opus"), dated July 1896 is written to the glory of Morris, Burne-Jones, and Chaucer. Sebastian Evans was to publish in 1903 the *High History of the Holy Grail*; he was an intimate friend of Burne-Jones.
9. Original drawing in white gouache over ink by Morris, depicting a frame of stylized vine shoots (154 x 198 mm) that appears in the Chaucer on pages 30, 127, 153, and 259; there is a presentation inscription from Sir Sydney Cockerell to Eric Millar, dated March 23, 1947. On the leaf of vellum paper on which this drawing is mounted, one may find the autograph pencil annotation signed by Eric Millar (Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum): "Given me by Sir Sydney Cockerell, 23

March 1947. The word 'Keates' in the center is in William Morris' hand, and refers to C.E. Keates, one of the engravers; cf. 'A Note by William Morris...together with a short description of the Press by C.S.C. Cockerell,' Kelmscott Press, 1898, p. 47."

[view loose items](#)

Items formerly loose in this volume



1. Proof of a photograph (170 x 220 mm) of Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, taken in 1890 by Barbara Leighton in the garden of "The Grange."

349

E.B.-J. & W.M. in the garden
at the Grange, 1890. Taken
by Barbara Leighton.

End →

Dear Fred

These are what I have
except the Chaucer & the birds. You have
Emile & the Chaps in prison - So that makes the
6 of them, all that I have had: I shall come on Wednesday
Yrs Wm



3a. Original unpublished drawing by Burne-Jones executed on stiff vellum paper (120 x 157 mm).



3b. Another original unpublished drawing by Burne-Jones executed on stiff vellum paper (130 x 174 mm).

My love

ROTTINGDEAN,
NE BRIGHTON.

3 o'clock. Friday
afternoon. Dec. 27.

18 hundred and 90 five
- Chaucer just finished.

Your most faithful
loving Eph.



BLESS YE MY CHILDREN.

MAY. 1896

This is the nastiest pen that ever was.

May 2 1896

ROTTINGDEAN,
NE BRIGHTON.

Oh my kown.

it is so cold here
and I am frightened
for fear Dan has caught
a new cold, & Angela
has tumbled down stairs
& you have been agitated.
and Daisy has missed
his mother & these
things make me very
anxious

5a. Pages 1 and 4 of an autograph letter from Burne-Jones to his daughter complaining of the cold and describing humorously all the calamities that might befall his family. On the fourth page, there is a pen-and-ink drawing by Burne-Jones depicting a stout Geoffrey Chaucer (with halo) who supports a Morris and Burne-Jones on each arm; the caption reads, "Bless ye my Children May 1896;" and underneath is written, "This is the nastiest pen that ever was."

& Jessie has gone over to the
Ridderdalen and she
may come he was coming
back, & the parson is
coming in this evening &
he may want to pray
out loud - altogether
life is very nervous
work. and Phil
may be lost in London
for I hear it is a

very big place -
I didn't much care for
Red cockade business -
not near so good as
others. will you write
to the author and
ask him to take
pains - will you
my precious darling
I am
I am
Loving Eph.

ROTTINGDEAN,
NE BRIGHTON.



My dear brother

THE GRANGE.

49, NORTH END ROAD,

WEST KENSINGTON, W.

It is quite possible that
Whit Saturday, Whit Sunday
Whit Monday, Whit Tuesday
and Whit Wednesday may
make the dream of a
Chaucer for the 3rd of June
very the question - & yet
if such might be, what
good it would be for me.
I wanted to take it
across to her at breakfast
time - — meanwhile

about the Seal for the University
of Wales, I find that the
Prince of Wales will be
installed as Chancellor about
the 20th of June, & he will
have to Seal the Charter -
Could an impression be made
of the Wax Seal in some
metal, which could be
used on the occasion, for
the die which will be
used afterwards will be
taken

may a day to make. I
suppose.

a Master matrix could
be made of the wax - &
a metal one afterwards
probably, which could
be used meantime -
Will you kindly tell me.

Very truly

Edmund Jones

THE PINES,

PUTNEY HILL. S.W.

July 14. 96

My dear Ned

A thousand thanks for
your share in the magnificent
gift I have just received. It is not,
my very dear sir, for me to praise—
it suffices me to admire, to appreciate,
& to enjoy. When the meridional glow
of genius is tempered by the cordial
urbanity—if I may be allowed that
endearing phrase—of friendship,
the emotions evoked are such as now
animate the (shall I say?) labouring
bosom of yours ever devotedly
Al Swinburne

Thanking for the
Kellogg Chances which
father - Mr Morris sent
him.

In librum aureum/ trium poetarum opus.



Geoffrey/ half a thousand years
Have you waited for your peers—
Greet them now/ your fellow-Seers!

Look how Edward here doth limn
All you have revealed to him—
Worlds and gods and seraphim.

Hand in hand comes William/ Who
Sheweth here all print can do
Worthy of his brethren two.

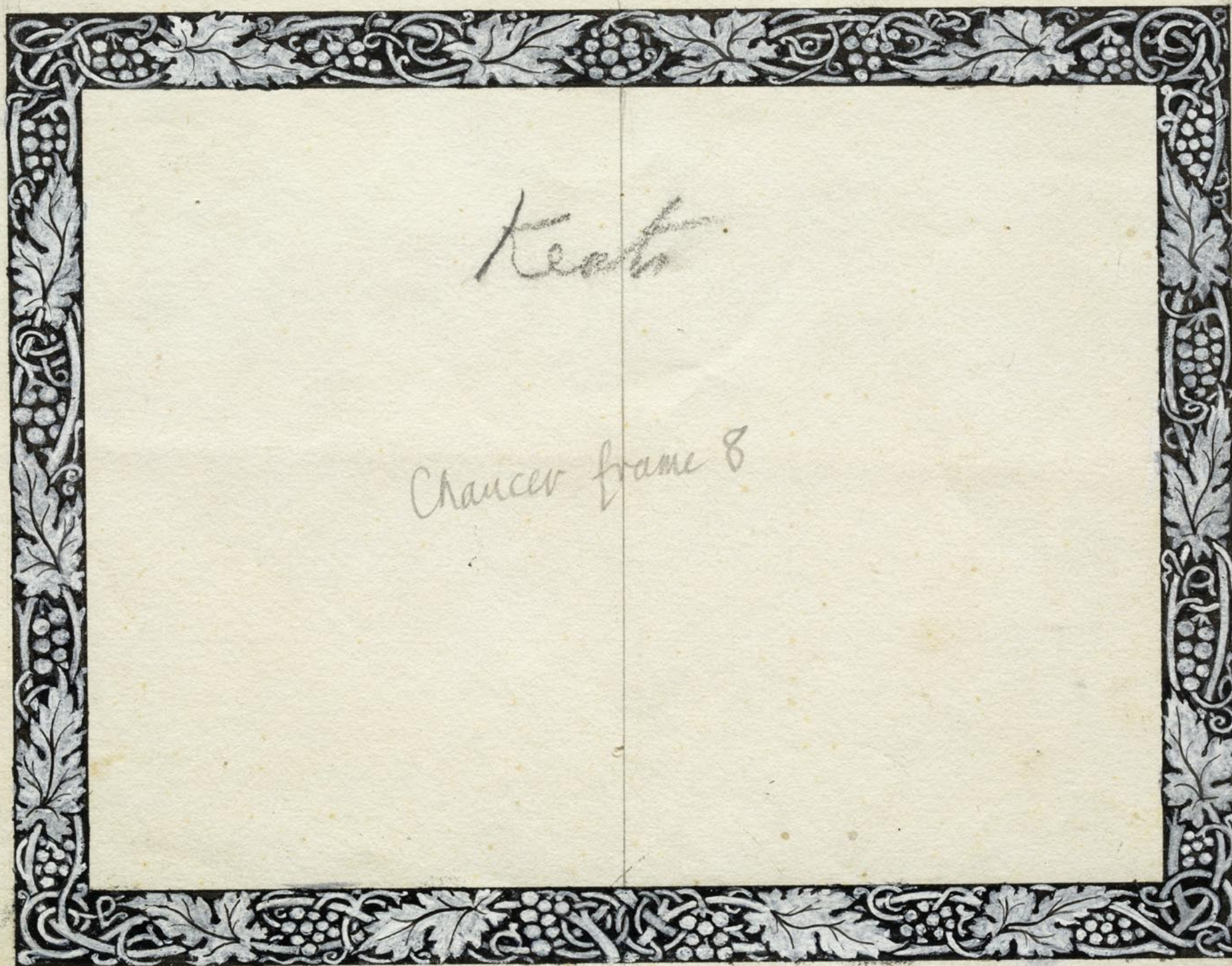
Chaucer—Burne-Jones—Morris! We
Turn your leaves and hear you three
Singing Benedicite.

S. E.

July/ mdccxcvi.

Sebastian Evans

Original design by William Morris from the Kelmscott Press Chaucer
To Eric Millar from Sydney Cockerell - Recd 23 March 1947 -



cf. pp. 30,
127, 153, 259

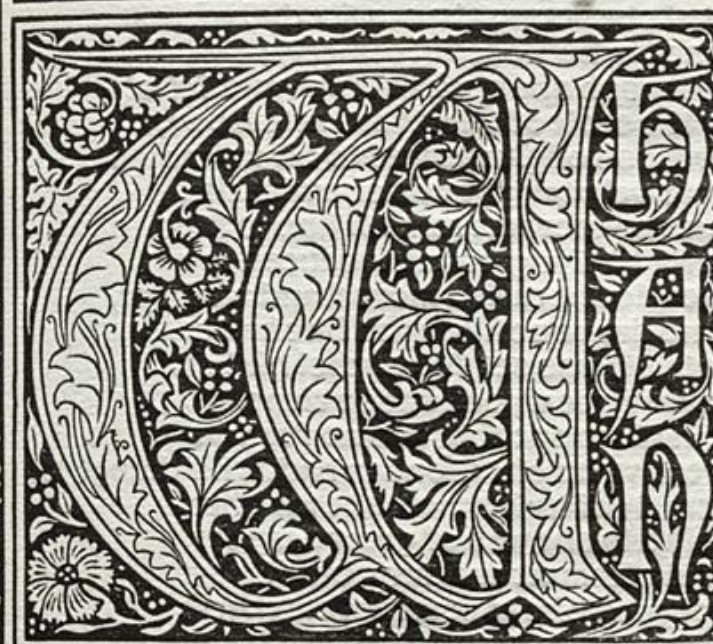
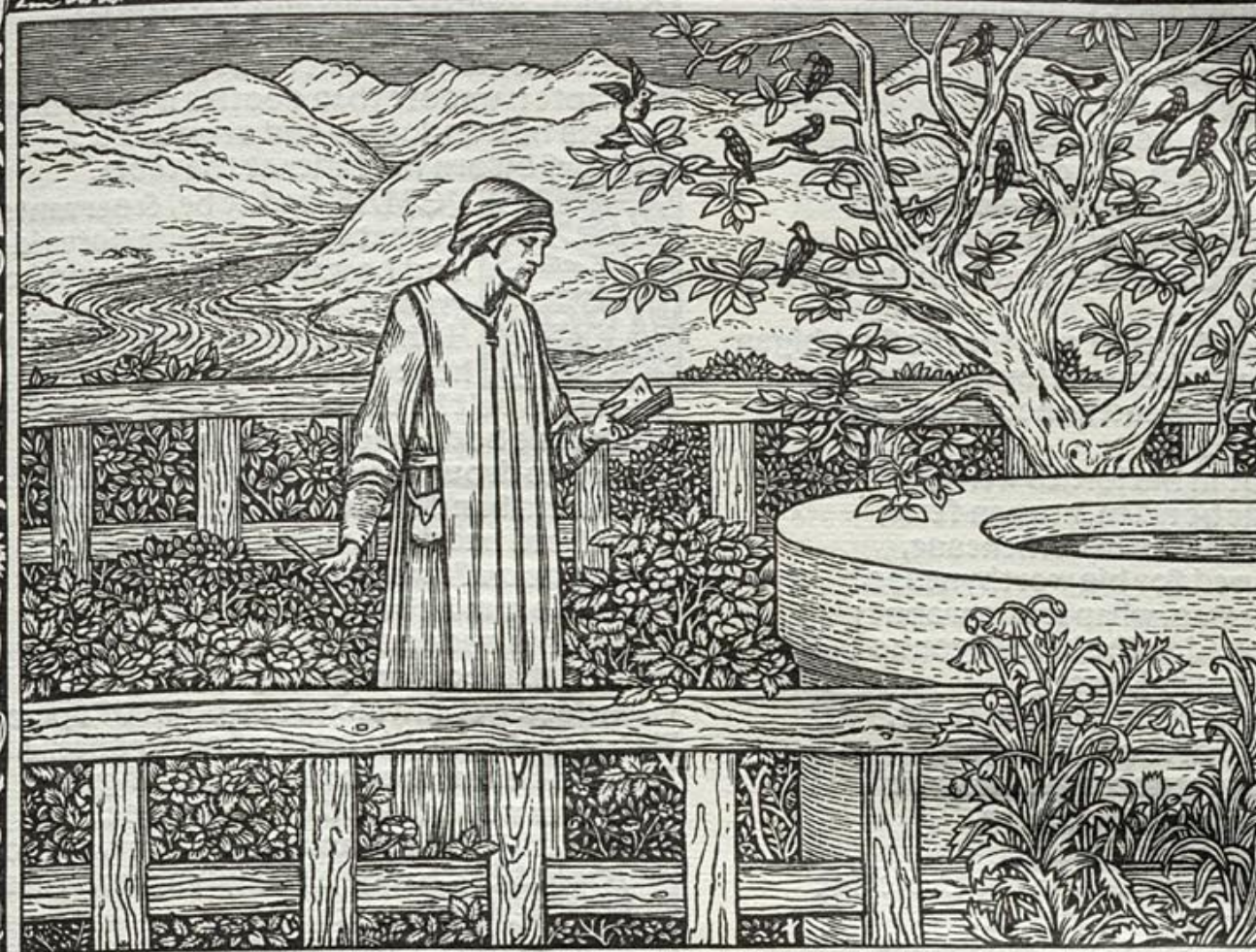
exactly same size - 1947

9. Original drawing in white gouache over ink by Morris, depicting a frame of stylized vine shoots (154 x 198 mm) that appears in the Chaucer on pages 30, 127, 153, and 259; there is a presentation inscription from Sir Sydney Cockerell to Eric Millar in the upper left. The word 'Keates' in the center is in William Morris's hand, and refers to C.E. Keates, one of the engravers.



the works of
Geoffrey Chaucer
now newly
imprinted

HERE BEGINNETH THE GAMES OF CAUNTERBURY
BURY AND FIRST THE PROLOGUE THEREOF



THAT Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open eye,
So priketh hem nature in hir corages;
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

BIF IL that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as
I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrym-
age
To Caunterbury with ful devout
corage,
At nyght were come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.